

[77 cont.]

762 inflicted on the objects which were the principal active agents
768 in carrying out his fatal determination. As the form of suicide
672 that is practiced in La Guajira is almost exclusively that of
hanging, they proceed to burn the branch on which the individual
hanged himself and the rope which he used, because, they say,
these were the direct causes of his death.

682 With respect to the punishment carried out on the objects
672 (inanimate to us) which served for the carrying out of suicide,
several suggestions may be made. In one case, the "compensation
payment for blood" may be recalled, the established customary
law of this community by means of which whatever spilling
of blood that may be caused in any person, voluntary or involuntary,
directly or indirectly, has to be paid for in accordance
with a valuation decreed by the so-called "arbitrators,"
[698] or "palabras," who are nothing more than intermediaries named
by the family groups affected to settle the affair peacefully.
This payment is considerable when the blood spilling ends in the
victim's death. Should the murderer refuse to pay the sum arranged
682 for (whether in livestock, necklaces, precious stones,
628 etc.), then the members of the victim's family group take
vengeance on him personally and kill him. All this naturally
ends in war to the death, or putchi, between the two extended
family groups, an occurrence which is extremely frequent in La
682 Guajira. Hence as "compensation payment for blood" cannot
762 be claimed, from these objects (the tree and the rope), they are
672 punished in default by destruction by fire. This hypothesis is
reinforced, if we remember that to the Guajiro Indian, as well as
[774] to most primitives, objects — which to us are not alive — are
[778] able to exercise both good and bad influences on the individual
(Cf. "Sickness and Medicine" and "Amulets, Fetishes, Talismans"),
because they possess a spirit — a kind of mana, or immaterial
force, which surrounds and animates everything.

762 Another suggestion that could be made with respect to the
783 destruction of the objects used by a suicide is the following: As
these articles were in direct contact with the dead man, and
particularly with a corpse as dangerous as a suicide is, it is
necessary that they be destroyed so that the contamination